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## **Translation: A Flawed Yet Indispensable Tool for Intercultural Communication**

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**Abstract:** This article deals with the problems of literary translations and their resolutions. The problems faced in literary translation are mostly due to variation of cultures behind the language. The original writer while writing comes across just one culture and the translator while translating has to wear at least two cultures, one of the source languages and the other of the target language. If the translator is translating through a filter language, then he is bound to face three cultures. In this article I have dealt with situations that are communicated or represented differently in different languages. Needless to say, that every language is evolved in its culture. Life itself is embedded in a particular style that is shaped or designed by its culture. The customs in one culture depicted through its language in its culture possibly cannot be the same in other language. Language basically is what you understand from its expressions. For example, take a marriage scene in European culture and the same situation in Indian culture and then move UP to Punjab and then to Ladakh, you will find a big difference between the two or three as well. I have chosen some examples to elaborate my views about the difficulties faced by the translators. In fact, translating interlingua and inter cultural texts become more difficult than the original writing. At the same time, I have mentioned that though translation is not only challenging but at times impossible too, yet it is a compulsion and we cannot do without it.

**Key words:** Literary translation, cultures, language, problems, communication, difficulties.

**Introduction:** All of us know that every section of society needs to interact with other sects. When we look at the literature produced in different language we get tempted to understand them in and

reach them in a way that we get enriched in knowledge. Knowledge is not just to read the books, actually what we gain through reading a books that knowledge. We cannot gain this knowledge by being an on looker, we have to get their knowledge .In such a language that is nearer to over gateway of knowledge. Therefore, translation becomes important to carry and spread knowledge from one language society to another language community. We can do many things of our own but to reach and gain knowledge makes us to search for things translated into our language. One should know that there is no sect or community knowledge wise sufficient in itself. Unless their things are translated into other languages and they study the other cultures through translation in their language the journey of knowledge is not complete. This process actually is a process of give and take and cannot be attend or achieved without the process of translation.

**Translation As an Instrument of Learning:** Translation has become a very important means of teaching, learning and experiencing the human efforts in understanding the life and its essential aspects. Human being by nature is the same in feelings and requirements but with the passage of time human being has through its living experience travelled a lot in the area of grasping the environment and identifying itself with respect to communication. Though all being the progeny of Adam, yet being different in colour, appearance, language, dress and ways of communication. So far, the basic emotions are concerned, human being is the same everywhere. For example, when it gets nothing to eat for some time or doesn't eat despite having food with it, starts feeling hungry. When it doesn't get water or doesn't drink it despite its availability starts feeling thirsty, when beaten by someone or pricked by someone physically it feels pain. Besides emotions or say feelings of love and hatred or even detachment has its effect on its behaviour. But the most important thing is to study that how human beings express these experiences orally or physically. Here it becomes obvious how a human being is different from animals. With animals you feel the same happenings as in humans but animals react to these situations differently. You can follow their signs and study them but due to absence of the power of speaking it is not that clear as it is in human beings. Reiss thinks there some special function of translation except the text types, “the purpose of the translation may be something other than the original; if it has to do with person, the translation may be addressed to a different readership than the original” (Reiss 89)

**Translation As a Tool of Propagation of Knowledge:**

With the passage of time human beings learn and practise what they learn by experience i.e. thinking as well as perceiving through their environment. Human beings react differently to different situations. They make use of others for them and at the same time get used for others occasionally under compulsion and somewhere willingly. The learning process keeps on making a human being

busy accepting or rejecting what comes their way. The way of living brought human being down from the hills, placed him or her on the banks of rivers or lakes so on and so fore. The human being by and by adopted to the circumstances, took to different ways of covering its body, had the different ways of feeding itself, came out of caves and built houses to spend the odd time in doors. Cultivated different crops to have verities for its existence as well as its wellbeing. These activities gave a shape to human culture. It took the humans decades and centuries to shape a culture for them that has different variations from place to place, race to race and atmosphere to atmosphere. As it wanted to express its feelings for its own or for others benefit, it made him/her to cultivate sounds and voices for this purpose. This way different communities or groups of humans cultivated different languages by and by. In fact, language is a baby of Culture itself and in due course of time language represents culture and culture cultivates particular expressions in culture.

**Translation As an Agent for Exchange of Culture:** Therefore, for study of a particular culture, its language becomes an important tool. As such interaction between cultures becomes interaction between languages and when you interact with languages that becomes at the same time an interaction between cultures. Therefore, this study comes across with what a particular culture presents through its language. In fact, this representation of culture is done through language and that is given the name of literature. Literature itself consists of so many elements. The two elements are the main and one out of it is (i) information and (ii) is literature.

**Translation of Knowledge Based Information:** The first one consists of knowledge that is transferred or transmitted to people belonging to other cultures, places or language orbits. This is based on facts i.e. knowledge. For example, water consists of  $H_2O$  i.e. two parts of Hydrogen and one part of Oxygen, Newton's third law of motion so on and so fore. There is no problem in transferring or translating such expression from one culture to another or from one language to another. Books of Philosophy or Books of Science can be translated from one language to another easily. However, there can be difficulty of availability of terminology because terms for every topic, sphere or field are not expected to be in every language but very often we find a solution to these by retaining the original terms and translate the information or the facts discovered by one group for another group.

**Professor Khalid Alvi** has very rightly said in his English translation of "Angaarey" that\_\_  
“Every book is unique for its textual features as well as the contextual framework within which it is conceived, produced and communicated”. (37)

While translating poetry this individual and unique way of expression that varies from poet to poet becomes more challenging. In poetry or for that matter any piece of literature demands a different frame of mind to understand and to communicate too.

We the teachers of literature face this challenge every now and then. Poetry borrows different shades and ways of expression from the metaphor, similes and even the selection of words itself. We while teaching have to delve into the text differently. You cannot teach a poem from an African English poet and an Indian English poet in the same way. Both need a different method and technique even the poems of the same poet at times demands different treatment for teaching and so is the translation business tuff and challenging. Archana Chauhan, an eminent scholar, throws light on the importance of literature (in original or translated) in her research article, “The role of English Literature in Promoting Cultural Awareness and Preservation”. She writes, “Literature allows for the preservation of indigenous languages and oral traditions. Writers like Louise Erdrich, with her exploration of Native American culture, or Witi Ihimaera, showcasing Maori traditions, highlight the importance of preserving marginalized voices and narratives.” (50)

**Impact of Culture on Process of Translation:** This is because every language has a culture behind it and when you deal with creative literature, it is not only the information or the fact, it carries its culture also with it. In every translation there are at least two cultures involved in it. Very often it becomes the involvement of three cultures instead of two. Here in India, we have been facing this problem all the time. India is a multilingual country. According to Indian constitution there are twenty-four languages recognised by the country but still there are many other languages backed by their cultures in use. For example, many languages other than recognised twenty-four are there with their literature having their cultures visible and boldly felt by the readers. Like Khasi, Bodo, Purgi, Gojri, Pahadi, Rajasthani, Tulu etc.

**Personal Experience as Translator:** I do not know much about all these languages just a little about English, Urdu and Hindi. You will be surprised to know when we Indians have to translate from one Indian language into the other Indian language, we face problems. Hindi people do not know Gujarati and Gujaratis do not know Kannada, Kannadikas do not know Malayalam so on or so fore. Therefore, for translating from one source Language of India into other target language from India, we very often have to take help from a filter language those are preferably English, Hindi and Urdu. I have already made it clear that behind every language it has its own culture.

In this way source language has its culture behind it and the target language has its culture behind it. When we translate through another language that I told you these are English, Hindi and Urdu, these link languages are known as filter languages and these filter languages also have their culture

behind them. Now you see if you translate from original source language directly to target language, it involves two cultures and if you translate it with the help of a filter language that process involves three cultures.

**Translation of Creative Literature:** I give you a very simple example of the complexity of these translations of creative literature, in Urdu we have a large number of second person pronouns like Tu (تو), Tum (تم), Aap (آپ), Huzoor (حضور), Huzoori Wala (حضور والا) Janab, (جناب) Janab\_ i\_ Aali (جناب عالی), Janab\_ i\_ Aaliya (جناب عالیہ) etc. Now you see if you translate these directly into other language, it would not be understood in the same way as it would carry a type of feeling in Urdu. The same way if you translate it into Hindi or English first or then from Hindi and English into Assamese or Bengali or Oriya and Tamil. I am trying to emphasize that translation of creative literature into other languages of the same country is not easy in any way. There are cultural losses or gains that make the basic expression something strange.

**A Typical Example of Cultural Nuances:** Just look at the piece of literature in Urdu or Hindi in which the cultural situations are carried in symbolic way. See the following in Hindi or Urdu (in English translation)

A group of young ladies was sitting and chatting something interesting was going on. All these young ladies were reacting to something with laughters and claps. Soon a post man came and asked for one lady, and handed over an envelope to her and left. She opened the envelope, it was a telegram, she read it and went inside. After an hour or so she appeared again in a white dress and lips almost sealed. Uttering no words. Ladies gathered around her as these understood that she got the information about the death of her husband and now she is dressed as widows do.

Imagine if there would be some English Ladies also in the group, those would not be able to understand what had happened. Instead, they would draw a different inference from the white dress of hers, as she is going to get married. What I mean to say that the translation of the piece would demand an explanation for the benefit of target language readers. There can be hundreds of examples of this nature in any language. Take the Essay " Florence Nightingale" by Lytton Strachey included in the compilation " Eminent Victorians". In fact, Florence was the first nurse who nursed the wounded soldiers. The author describes her as " Lady with the Lamp" but if rendered into some of our Indian Languages without explaining what the author meant by this expression, one would take her as a devil with a lamp in her hand to misguide the people so that they go astray. It does not mean that we should restrain from translating creative writings (prose or poetry).

**Translation As a Necessity:** If we do not continue with the activity of translation, we shall be depriving the human races from getting acquainted with what is around them. It will restrict human experience, efforts, progress and development within the communities that take the lead in such efforts. Human beings are supposed to share what they achieve, with their fellow beings. Knowledge is a right of every human creature. We cannot hoard knowledge or progress as we cannot deny food and water to those who are hungry and thirsty, if we have it. In the same manner we cannot deny knowledge to anyone. It means if we can afford translating our or any other communities literature, we have to do it as far as we can.

**Translation As a Means of Learning:** In Islam it is among the duties of all human beings to seek knowledge and you know that knowledge is not all available within one community or within one language or within one culture. Therefore, this duty can be fulfilled with the help of translation only. Of course, there are problems in carrying out this task as I mentioned earlier. These problems vary from subject to subject, culture to culture and language to language. In translating pure knowledge or information the biggest problem is of terminology. It is not easy to find equivalents, appropriate terms and lucid expressions in every language. In such cases we can coin terms if it is easily possible. It should not be an exercise of prejudice. There should be no compulsion or bias. Where it is not possible, there we can take the benefit of original terms like Radio, Thermometer, Injection, Petrol, Diesel, Motor etc. We should discourage such terms that will be difficult to pronounce or even write like in Hyderabad Usmania, (Darul Tarjama) it was recommended to use " Miqyasul Hararah" (مقياس حراره) for thermometer. Instead, we can encourage terms coined like "Door Darshan ( دور درشن), for Television, or " Hatif" (ہاتف) for the Telephone. Furthermore, instead of getting afraid of terms we should encourage making use of original terms and stress on transfer of knowledge and not getting entangled in the web of language.

**The Nature of Activity of Translation:** In qualifying translation mainly two adjectives are used "beautiful" and "faithful". Actually what happens when we translate a text and go word for word, the process is taken as "faithful". Very often the faithful translations become so boring and unpleasant. The readability is reduced to five to ten percent. Now imagine what will be the use of translation that is not read at all. Against it if the translation is based on the content and the spirit of the translated text is not lost and the language of translation is appealing, it sounds well, the readability is enhanced. In this way the translation becomes beautiful. One of the experts has suggested that, translation can be either beautiful or faithful not both.

**How is Translation more Difficult Than Original Writing:** The fact of the matter is that translations made just faithful, lose the beauty or say readability. Therefore, the aim of the



translator should always be that it should be readable i.e. beautiful. It does not matter that if it is not hundred percent faithful, however the crux of the text should never be compromised. This problem is faced when we translate creative literature not the writings of scientific nature or of informative nature. In creative literature the style and way of thinking even diction varies from writer to writer. Certain texts, in creative writing are really not translatable, but the curiosity of readers and desire of writers and translators is always there that the creative pieces of literature should cross the barriers of language, region, countries and languages to remain available globally.

**Difference Between Original and Translation:** Some creative writers of course who could translate their writings into other languages did it themselves e.g. Tagore Rabindranath translated his collection of poems "Gitangali" into English that got him Nobel Prize Very recently a Kannadika writer Mrs. Banu Mushtaq got " Booker Prize" only when her short stories were translated in English under the title "Heart Lamp". As such translating creative literature becomes not only unavoidable but tempting too. Prof. Mohammad Zaman Azurdah has in his book " Mauj-i- Naqd" explained the peculiarities of an original writer and that of a translator. He has said that original writer is like a " feature film maker", and the translator is like a " documentary film maker". Feature film maker can substitute a location if he does not get one, he needs, he can change the cast, i.e. he can substitute a character if he doesn't find the available character apt to his needs.

**Difference of Idiom in Different Languages and Translation:** As I put it earlier, every language has a culture behind it and every language in addition to its power of communication represents that culture also to what it belongs to. In creative literature it is not very important what you say the significant aspect is that how you say it. This " How" in every culture indicates a marked difference. For example, I tell you Urdu and Punjabi are two languages spoken in most of the areas of Punjab both in East Punjab as well as in West Punjab. See when while speaking in Urdu if he has to say " Yes", he will put it as " Ji Haan" (جی ہاں) and in the same region a Punjabi speaker will say " Haan Ji" (ہاں جی) for the same expression. This " Haan Ji" and " Ji Haan" depict two cultures. There is a very good example is often repeated with satire among Urdu scholars of UP. about the meeting of Iqbal and Pyare Sahab Rashid (Urdu). When these two personalities met in Lucknow and later on some people from Lucknow enquired from Pyare Sahab Rashid that what transpired between them when they met Pyare Sahab Rashid in the first instance avoided to give any reply. Later on, when people insisted about what was there that they discussed, he fell to their demnad and said, "Bus Yahi ki woh Haan Ji Haan Ji kahte rahe aur Mai Ji Haan Ji haan". Now see the difference between these expressions. One represents Punjabi Culture and other Lucknowi Culture (Urdu Culture)



A young translator Anju Ranjan while translating twenty classical poems of Robert Burns from English to Hindi poem “Ae Fond Kiss”, faced these problems. She has expressed this difficulty in her forward of the book under the sub\_ title of “Niji Anubhav” (निजी अनुभव).

“Never met-or never parted-

We have never been broken-hearted”. (24)

Even translating one's own poetry from original to some other language demands a number of precautions. A Gujarati poet Varsha Das who composes poetry in three languages English, Hindi and Gujarati has faced this problem. You can come across the same when you go through her collection “Kavita”, while translating poem’s “provided I Keep Walking” It becomes obvious from her this collection of poems in three languages that she has to choose subjects, style and method of communications in accordance with the language.

“Like a head of dry twigs

It was scattered all over”. (156)

#### **Difference Between Source, Target and Filter Language:**

As I told you earlier that very often it. I mean translation projects different shade when translated from original and translated through a filter language. As an example, I would present two small passages from two translations one is from original Kashmiri directly and the other from a filter language (Hindi).

" The affluent dignitary is also like a mirror. The poor common man looks at this very mirror wishfully all his life. But this mirror has its own cracks, twists, lines and wrinkles. The poor man being also simpleminded rubs his eyes in the hope of getting a clear view. But he fails to understand that by doing this he cannot remove the wrinkles on the mirror's surface." (30-31)

The same passage translated from a filter language Hindi:

“A prosperous and respectable man is also a mirror. A poor common man keeps on staring expectantly at this mirror throughout his life. But the mirror usually has an inherent shrivel and this common man has such a simple nature that he keeps on rubbing his own eyes to ascertain whether there is any defect in them. But how can he vanquish the wrinkles of the mirror by rubbing his own eyes." (19)

**Conclusion:** While concluding my presentation I would very humbly suggest that no translation can be a perfect substitute for original piece of literature for every creative writing is incomplete when detached from its culture. The cultural nuances are associated with the piece of literature as dress is to body or body is to soul. Let me say that despite such difficulties, for intercultural communication the process of translation is indispensable rather unparallel. Had there been no

translations we even at this advanced technical age would be rendered deaf and dumb before other language communities, not to talk only on international level but within our own country India where 24 languages are recognised by our constitution and there are many tribal languages in vogue besides these 24. As such I would repeatedly stand for translations even if there are some losses too.

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